



**TOWARD A HERITAGE YOUTH  
ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM**

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## SITUATION BRIEF #19

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***“UNESCO advocates the reaffirmation of identity, mutual respect, dialogue, and unity in diversity, solidarity and a positive interaction among the cultures of the world. This is valid for all areas, including for heritage, its identification, protection, conservation and promotion. It is of key importance that youth is involved in these activities so that it can build commitment and strengthen action in favour of preserving our cultural and natural heritage. Thus, efforts employed today will benefit not only the present generation, but also the generations of the future.”*** (Engaging Youth in World Heritage, UNESCO, 2020)

### **Providing a platform for youth participation in nominating Victoria, “historic port and trading hub”, as a World Heritage Site**

Youth engagement is crucial for Victoria as a World Heritage Site, both to inspire and involve the young leaders of today, and also to inform and shape future generations of leaders and their communities. Four in 10 people – 42% of the global population – are aged under 25, and 26% are under 15. On key global education, social and cultural global challenges reflected in UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty and hunger, health and pandemics, sustainable cities, climate change and protection of nature, youth voices are increasingly important and can be crucial to call attention to the need for action.

For a World Heritage Site, both local and global youth leadership is key, as it is through the exchange of ideas, learnings and knowledge that understanding and deep engagement are possible. Youth and children also need different but complementary channels to engage fully. The proposal for Victoria as a World Heritage Site needs to be developed in a way that consults and involves youth



advisors. Of key importance, a Youth Advisory Council of local and global youth leaders and organisations should be launched, engaging indigenous and non-indigenous youth voices, and supported and facilitated by a co-op student each summer, in order to guide and integrate programmes and tools to enhance engagement of youth and children.

### **Programmes and tools to enhance youth engagement in the World Heritage Site**

- Youth Led World Heritage Site FB page / Website

A new website for youth and children, linked to a FB page and other social media

tools such as Insta and Twitter, can feature activities / events / and key topics related to the nomination of Victoria, historic port and trading hub as a World Heritage Site. Co-hosted by a Youth Advisory Council partners and supported by the University of Victoria History Department, linked into the UNESCO Schools Network, this website can feature publish stories, photos and art by young people (and respected elders), share resources for youth and children, their teachers and families, and build a community of engaged children and youth supporting the nomination.



- Special Events and Activities

In partnership with SD 61 or other youth focussed, Victoria-based organizations, and also international youth organisations, the World Heritage Site can offer a programme to involve youth in activity-based events that are part of and benefit the nomination of Victoria, historic port and trading hub as a World Heritage Site. From online roundtables featuring youth speakers and co-chaired by youth, to history and cultural heritage contests and presentations, to inter-active workshops and youth/children programming during other general events, so much is possible.

Of particular interest are partnership and engagement events and

activities between indigenous and non-indigenous youth, so that all youth can learn from each other and from elders about the millennial civilizations and natural environment of Victoria. With leadership of the Youth Advisory Council and support from the co-op student, there can be a programme of online and in-person events and activities each year, building engagement and involvement of youth and children into every aspect of the campaign.

Suggested learning activities in Empowering Youth for Heritage:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2111>

- Victoria World Heritage Site Youth Forums

Youth-to-youth communication is key to engaging young people in protection of World Heritage.

Online Youth Forums, led by the Youth Advisory Council, could serve as a platform to bring young people, educators and heritage experts together to foster intercultural learning and exchange through presentations and discussions focused on Victoria, historic port and trading hub. By touching on key topics of interest to youth and children, and integrating special children's programming opportunities that complement the youth leadership and engagement activities, the Youth Forums can become a place to start conversations, open exchanges and launch new activities together. The Youth Forum would also provide an opportunity for youth to meet and learn about each other's heritage; meet with heritage experts and educators and for the youth to discuss common concerns and discover new roles for themselves in the heritage field. Options might include:

- o In partnership with the Hallmark Society, the Youth Forum could be proposed as a day-long event, perhaps as part of the South Vancouver Island Regional Heritage Fair program or as a stand-alone event, to



be hosted during the summers or holidays, engaging youth from local schools and internationally.

- o In partnership with the BC Heritage Fairs Society, the Youth Forum could also be proposed as a morning event during the next Provincial Heritage Fair being held in Victoria, coupled with an exploration, tour or scavenger hunt activity for local and international school teams to be involved in, in the afternoon throughout Victoria, returning for awards or participation medals (like running a marathon) in the closing plenary.
- o In partnership with Heritage BC, a forum could be proposed as a day event during the next Heritage BC Conference held in Victoria.



- Action Camps at World Heritage sites

Activating the UNESCO model for ‘Action Camps’ the Youth Advisory Council, co-op student and supporters can explore the idea of a series of action camps in Victoria. These camps could be led by another organization in partnership with the Victoria World Heritage nominating committee and serve as a way of

identifying and engaging youth leaders for the Youth Advisory Council and other programming, over the years. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2111>

## **Possible Funding sources**

CRD Arts Commission, Victoria Rotary Clubs, Heritage Legacy Fund, Victoria Foundation, Victoria Heritage Foundation, Canada Student Summer Works.

## **Observations**

- The South Vancouver Island Regional Heritage Youth Fair could form the organizational nexus for launching a palette of local heritage youth engagement programs as described above.
- And outstanding example of Youth engagement is programs offered by the Saanich Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary. This could provide a model for other site intensive programs, for instance Victoria's Old Town and Chinatown.
- The leadership of a Victoria Heritage Youth Council, embracing both human and natural history, could be embedded in one of the local high schools. An opportunity could arise with the reopening of the (now under restoration) Victoria High School.

## **Resources**

Engaging Youth in World Heritage: developing policy guidance and good practices for State Parties and World Heritage Stakeholders . <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/949/>

Empowering Youth for Heritage: <file:///C:/Users/Windows/AppData/Local/Temp/activity-979-1.pdf>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2111>

Youth to Youth Communication: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1151>

Voices of Future Generations Children's Initiative: <https://www.vofg.org>

Harmony Online Journal - Youth Voices on Science, Law & Sustainability <https://harmonyyouthvoices.com/>